BX
5935
.063

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.
Chap. BX 5935
Shelf .O63
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

9-14-28

THE CHURCH—THE FAITH—TRADITION.

A

SERMON,

BY

BENJAMIN TREDWELL ONDERDONK, D.D.

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW-YORK,

AND PROFESSOR OF THE NATURE, MINISTRY, AND POLITY OF THE CHURCH,
IN THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN THE UNITED STATES.

1878 WASHINGTON

New-York:
ONDERDONK & FORREST,
PUBLISHERS, 4 JOHN STREET.

1844.

Deposited in the Clerk's Office
for the Southern District of
New York, January 16. 1844.

BX5935
.063

[Entered according to Act of Congress, by ONDERDONK & FORREST, in the Clerk's Office of the Southern District of New-York, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-four.]

5766

PRINTED BY F. CLARKE, 115 FULTON STREET, N. Y.

The following is the Sermon which the Author recently preached in St. Paul's Chapel and St. Clement's Church, with, however, a large addition since it was preached in St. Paul's, and some further addition since it was preached in St. Clement's.

B. T. O.

New-York, Jan. 4, 1844.

Sermon.

2 Timothy i: 13, 14.

"Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us."

The Gospel is that system of faith and practice which God has caused to be written for the best interests of men in time and through eternity. By it alone they can attain to true holiness and happiness here; and it only shows them the appointed road to future everlasting glory.

As His instrument for preserving and extending this Gospel in the world, its Divine Author has been pleased to establish His Church. That Holy Society is constituted the pillar and ground of the truth. In this capacity it is divinely commissioned to retain the truth, to preach the truth, and to hand it down to all generations, and diffuse it throughout the earth. As a principal agency herein its ministry was originally commissioned by Christ Himself, with power to transmit the commission to all future time. To this ministry, in order to the fulfilment of this its immense, holy, and comprehensive design, is committed the dispensation of the sacraments, whereby men are to be brought into the school, family, or Church of Christ, and there receive and profess the truth, and enjoy the grace and mercy, which are provided for all faithful subjects of the evangelical covenant. To the ministry too it appertains to conduct the sacred services in which the Church holds communion with her Divine Lord, commends herself to His care, guidance and blessing, seeks for her members the varied benefits which they need at His hands, prays for the world lying in wickedness, that it may be brought to the saving knowledge and consistent practice of the truth, and renders her

meet tribute of thanksgiving, praise, and adoration; and in which the precious faith of the Gospel is carried home to the heart, warms the devout sensibilities, and is thus most effectually established in the understanding. The ministry is also GOD'S appointed agency for proclaiming the messages of salvation, and all the holy revelations connected with them which fill the Sacred Scriptures, and for founding on them the instructions that result from that study and meditation, which, duly exercised on GOD'S word, with faithful seeking of His grace, have promise of direction in the right way, and guidance to a right end.

Holy Scripture and ancient authors clearly show that in the fulfilment of these great ends of the Church and its ministry, there have, from the first, been duly appointed and established forms of worship, and other symbols, summaries, and standards of the faith given to the Church by CHRIST and His inspired apostles; and that there has also been a recognized authority and discipline to enforce their observance, and save the Church from the influence of false teachers, and their unchristian doctrines, effectually enlist and preserve its members in the true faith and practice of the Gospel, and commend them to the adoption of the world.

All this, in the primitive purity of the Gospel, was comparatively simple and easy. The love of CHRIST, shed abroad in the hearts of believers, was pure, warm, and operative. The evangelical principle of communion with CHRIST through the medium of His Church, was universally admitted and put in practice. In waiting on the ministrations of the priesthood of that Church, Christians sought guidance in the heavenly doctrines and precepts of the Gospel. Their pastors, being the apostles themselves, or those brought up at their feet, or at theirs who had enjoyed the personal instructions of the apostles, or who had learned CHRIST while the deep impression of those instructions still remained in the Church, urged upon them principles and precepts bearing the hallowed stamp of apostolic truth and purity. Great too was the simplicity of those primitive and truly evangelical instructions. Unconnected with temporal welfare and civil distinctions, and made indeed the object of bitter and eager persecution, the Church had nothing to offer her members but the testimony of a good conscience, humble reliance on the approbation and favour of

their Divine Master, and the hope of future eternal reward. It was therefore their main anxiety to receive the Gospel as its Great Author had given it to them. They knew it was from God, and that it was therefore the best, and exactly as it should be. As soon would they have questioned the propriety and fitness of the order of the natural world, and attempted to show how much better than under the existing arrangement, day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, might have made their revolutions, as have presumed to sit in judgment on the revealed system of the Gospel. As soon would they have deferred the use of food for sustenance, and of medicine to heal their sickness, until they could have thoroughly investigated and understood *how* they were to produce their wonted effects, as have hesitated about receiving those doctrines, and walking in those commandments and ordinances of the Gospel, which were set forth and appointed for nourishing their spiritual life, healing their spiritual maladies, and preserving them unto life everlasting, until their reason could comprehend every thing, and present it to them as what itself could have as well discovered or enforced. They were content to know that God was in heaven, and they upon earth; that He was infinite, and they finite; that He was acting for them because of their incompetency to act for themselves; and that He neither could nor would deceive them. Their only inquiries therefore were, What is of God? What does He teach? What has He caused to be written for our learning, and incorporated into the system of that Church which He has established for our spiritual and eternal good? Upon receiving satisfaction on these points, their only and immediate conclusion was, Therefore this is right—this is truth—this is duty. Humble, cheerful, and devout acquiescence becomes me. Grateful to my Heavenly Father for having ordained and required it, I will not presume to sit in judgment upon it.

Under this primitive, truly evangelical, and—all the proud boasting of reason falsely so called to the contrary notwithstanding—truly *reasonable* state of things, the Christian pastors had, in their instructions, little else to do than simply urge, in Scripture language, the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel. The exhortations which accompanied their public ministrations were generally

short and simple. With little of studied argument or learned elucidation in their explanation or enforcement, they kept before the people the standards of their faith, and pressed them on their devout and consistent practical adoption.

Instances indeed there were, even thus early, in which the presumption of human intellect began to show itself. More ingenuity of head than sanctification of heart was sometimes brought into the Christian ministry, and led to the introduction of specious doubts, to indulgence in fanciful speculations, and to a bold spirit of innovation and perversion. Thus crept in heresies to soil the purity and mar the unity of the body of CHRIST's members.

The Christian pastors were called to meet these difficulties. Prompt discipline soon placed heretical teachers where, separate from the Catholic Church, there was little danger of their errors spreading. For then the unity of the Church, as connected with unity of faith, and essential to it, was held dear, and considered inseparable from the true love of CHRIST, and real devotion to His service. Then the great adversary had not so far succeeded in his wicked designs on the glory of GOD, the purity of the Gospel, and the influence of true piety in the world, as to recommend, under the false appearance of liberality, indifference as to who is heard, or what is heard, provided preaching is attended, curiosity gratified, taste pleased, and the frightful name of bigot avoided.

These beginnings of errors gave increased force, even in the apostles' days, to the fitness, usefulness, and necessity, of symbols or summaries, and standards of faith, called in the text, and elsewhere in Scripture, forms of sound words, forms of doctrine, good confessions, sacred deposites, and the like. They were in part incorporated into the Church's prayers and praises, and in part declaratory forms of Christian profession. They embodied, as far as they went, the faith actually held by the Church, under the teaching of CHRIST and His inspired ministers, even before it was recorded on the pages of the New Testament. These declaratory forms of profession appear to have been originally very brief, embracing merely a few of the leading facts and principles of the Gospel, which were denied or corrupted by false teachers. For the rest, *Christianus sum*, I am a Christian—such was the prevailing godly concord of the Church—was sufficient.

In process of time, however, the state of the Church began to change. Even within its own borders, oppositions to the primitive faith increased in number and in influence. This was, in a good measure, the consequence of Christianity being embraced by the great philosophers of the day. Many of these, having been, in their respective schools, more accustomed to the exercise of the head, and indulgence in ingenious speculation, than the government of the heart, and a severe and disinterested adherence to *the truth*, and not suffering their conversion to be so thorough as to bring every high imagination into the obedience of CHRIST, were prone, after their admission into the Church, and even into its ministry, to exercise a rash and daring ingenuity on the Christian system, and thus often present it in a distorted shape, and with no small mixture of alloy.

Others of these converted philosophers, from a sincere desire to recommend Christianity to their former brethren of the schools, were induced to endeavour to prove to them that it would admit of close philosophical investigation, and was not, therefore, as it had been represented, unworthy of adoption by an enlightened and scientific mind. This was indeed true. But the effort too often presented a successful temptation to push the researches and investigations of reason beyond the bound, which she herself prescribes, of entire subserviency to the will and wisdom of *Infinite Intelligence.*

Often, too, a pious and disinterested effort to meet and counteract the unfavourable operation of these several causes, by being carried too far, led to counter-speculations, which increased the evil it was designed to remedy.

All these circumstances, giving rise, from time to time, to new phases of departure from the simplicity and integrity of the Gospel, all professing to be drawn from the Scriptures, led to gradual additions to the symbols, creeds, or confessions, by which the Church declared her sense of the Scriptures, and would enlist in what she held to be the truth as it is in JESUS, the profession of her members, and the instructions of her pastors.

In this, however, the Church acted simply in her character as a witness. She did not undertake to *establish* truth, but to *declare* it. As points not before heard of were introduced into the

teaching of her pastors, she subjected them to the test of that system which CHRIST and His apostles had left to the Church, and a record of which had been gathered in the New Testament. When plausible pretext for such points was found in their supposed accordance with Scripture, she inquired how the part of the Scripture concerned had been understood by the great body of Christians from the first; assuredly gathering that that was to be received as sound in preference to the conjectures and criticisms of individuals. Her decisions in the premises were of no authority in themselves; and were urged by her simply on the ground of their conformity with the catholic faith which had been revealed to the Church, and registered in the New Testament. Thus arriving at the truth, she exercised the authority which her divine LORD had committed to her, by enforcing the profession of it on her members, and its faithful teaching on her pastors. They were required to hold fast the form of sound words, in which revealed truth was embodied, and had been handed down, and to keep that good thing committed to the Church, or the sacred *depositum* of the faith received from CHRIST and His apostles.

The sound principle herein concerned cannot be better illustrated than by reference to the ground on which we receive that symbol of faith, had in reverence by all enlightened advocates of the doctrine of the Trinity, *the Nicene Creed.*

The spirit of sect, always welcome to the carnal mind, had divided heathen philosophers into divers schools or parties, distinguished each by some favourite theory connected more or less remotely with the current idolatry. None of these was more extensively ramified, or exerted a wider influence, than that of the gnostics. Many of its professors and teachers were among those who made early show of conversion to the Christian name. I say *show* of conversion, without meaning to say that the conversion was in all cases unreal. In many, it was doubtless sincere as far as it went. That is, their reason was satisfied that CHRIST was a wise and good teacher, having a fair claim to respect and confidence; and that His religion was so virtuous and good that it ought to be embraced. Their devotional feelings and views too, and sense of religious obligation, were drawn into ready

sympathy with its infinite superiority, as a system of piety, to the religion in which they had been nurtured. But at the same time, they found it hard to bring their intellectual pride into subjection. Their former systems had given them certain notions of a derived and subordinate divinity. These they coupled ith wthe Scripture views of the nature of CHRIST, and conceived of Him as an exalted creature, endowed with some, but not with all the attributes of Deity. What, in the eye of sound catholic interpretation of Scripture, was evidence of the co-existence in CHRIST of the human with the divine nature, they construed, in their individual rendering of Scripture, into proofs of His falling short of full and supreme divinity. Their system, appealing to that pride of the unrenewed heart which revolts at subjugating private judgment to superior authority, and urged with zeal and eloquence, gained ground. At length large numbers of Christian teachers and disciples were found who believed and represented the Gospel as not favouring the doctrine of the real and full divinity of CHRIST. Thus, from the same sacred pages, the judgment of one party drew one conclusion, and that of the other quite a different one.

Christianity had by this time received the assent of the head of the Roman empire, and become the religion of that wide-spread power. The Bishops and pastors of the flock of CHRIST were naturally and devoutly anxious that these doctrinal differences should be healed by union in the *true faith*. The emperor, although not yet a member of the Church, was evidently very honest and sincere in his preference for Christianity, and his desire to promote its interests, and have it for the religion of his people. He participated in the desire to settle, if possible, this cardinal point of the true nature of CHRIST. Here, however, were learned men on both sides, and on both sides men of piety, honesty, and sincerity, who differed from each other, each appealing to the written word. This written word, that is the New Testament, it must be borne in mind, is an inspired minute and record of a faith previously existing, with occasional explanations, illustrations, and defences of it; very deficient, however, in systematic arrangement, and evidently designed to exercise Christians in that *inquiry*, *search*, and *study*, which make the embracing of the faith a *moral act*,

wherein the *will* and *understanding* are to be largely concerned. The question to be settled was, which of the systems—for it is evident that with either point, the *truth* or the *falsehood* of the doctrine of CHRIST's supreme divinity, is necessarily connected a *system* widely different from that connected with the other—the question was, which of the systems was the true one. The reasonable ground taken by both the emperor and the pastors of the Church was, that if they could ascertain what had been from the first the faith on this point of the whole Church, that must be the true meaning of the inspired text, and therefore, the required faith of Christians. The emperor, accordingly, summoned a council of Bishops from all parts of his empire, to meet at Nice, and hence called the Nicene Council. It met in the year of our LORD 325, and was composed of about 300 Bishops from all parts of the Christian world. Among them were many aged men whose knowledge of the Church must have reached back to a period when it was under the government of Bishops who must have received *their* knowledge of the Church and its doctrines from pastors but two or three degrees removed from the last of the apostles. These men, too, and those who had handed the faith to them, be it remembered, had held it through bitter persecutions, when the testimony of a good conscience was their only support, the world frowned on them, and their sole hope was in the approbation of Heaven, which, without conscientious adherence to the truth they could not expect to enjoy. These men assembled, not to give their private judgments as to what was truth and what not, but to bear testimony as to what had been the received doctrine in their several portions of the Church, for as long an antecedent period as recollection or testimony could reach. Upon a full investigation of the matter, it appeared that in all parts of Christendom, and from time immemorial, the supreme divinity of CHRIST had been the received doctrine of the Church. The question then naturally occurred, *Whence could this doctrine have arisen?* The universal practice founded upon it of worshipping CHRIST as GOD, must have been downright idolatry, if the doctrine was not true. Could the whole Christian world have been supposed to have fallen into idolatry at so early a period? Clearly not. This catholic doctrine, then, furnishes the true light by

which to interpret and understand the Scriptures when they speak of the nature of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Hence the value and authority of the Nicene Creed. It is not merely a summary of the private judgments of the venerable fathers who set it forth; but their testimony to the faith which the Church had maintained from the first, even before the Canon of Scripture was complete, and therefore from the direct teaching of the inspired apostles.

As my purpose in introducing this point was merely to illustrate a principle, I have given to this whole Creed its usual title of Nicene, although there are some points in it which were added, as formidable objections arose, by a subsequent similar process.

This mode of arriving at the truth, or in other words the right use of tradition in that matter, is much misrepresented, if charged with the substituting of human for divine authority. Not so. It is merely a reasonable and necessary mode of arriving at a knowledge of divine revelation. As given to us, that revelation of course requires to be interpreted. As it was not completed until after the Church was in full possession of the faith, the fact of *what faith that was* which the Church had before the inspired record of it was made, is clearly the best rule by which to interpret and understand that record; or in other words, by which to know what is the truth which GOD has given to His Church.

For the correct understanding of this view, we must again bear in mind the fact that the record given in the New Testament of the faith of the Church is far from being a systematic one. It has been wisely put in another shape, and consists mainly of incidental notices and illustrations. The favourable moral bearing of this has been before noticed.

This *incontestible fact*, however, derogates not from the *sufficiency* of the Scripture record.

The experience of the Church of GOD in all ages, evinces the utter inadequacy of *mere* tradition to hand truth down unadulterated and unmutilated. We should, therefore, regard as an unspeakable mercy the kindness and love of GOD in causing to be written under the inspiration of the HOLY GHOST, that New

Testament in which there is a record or notice of all that He, in His infinite wisdom, has appointed to be held by His Church as of obligation. Whatsoever, therefore, cannot be proved by that sacred volume, is not in any wise to be maintained as of necessity to be believed or practised. It is, however, nevertheless, true, that much that is there but *incidentally noticed*, or but *inferentially deducible*, is proved to be *of obligation* by that light of primitive catholic tradition, which shows it to have been a part of the evangelical system bequeathed to the Church by CHRIST and His apostles.

Familiar illustration of this is afforded in two points very extensively conceded to be of Scripture obligation. I refer to the religious observance of the first day of the week, and to the bringing of little children to CHRIST by the sacrament of baptism. You will look in vain in the New Testament for any direct precept enforcing either of these duties. In the earliest developments, however, which we have of the Christian system, we find both held as of sacred obligation. In the New Testament we find *records* which clearly intimate that the first day of the week had religious services performed thereon, and one reference to a day termed *the Lord's day*. We therein also find such references to baptism, and to connection with the Church, or covenant relation and appropriation to CHRIST, as clearly *intimate* that children were, and should be, made members of His Church. In the history of the primitive Church we find that the first day of the week *was* religiously observed, and that children *were* baptized, as matters of religious obligation. Hence the conclusion that the parts of Scripture mentioned are evidence of *duty* in the premises; that is, that it is a part of the system of CHRIST's religion, as revealed in the New Testament, that Sunday should be religiously observed, and that children should be baptized.

I trust, my brethren, that I have now made it appear that tradition is valuable as a rule for the right understanding of the word of GOD. Whenever you hear of its being set up as *another rule* of faith and practice, you hear of that which has no foundation in truth, as it respects the principle involved, and which is equally untrue and unjust respecting *the fact of that principle*

being held by any who rightly appreciate sound catholic doctrine.

Thus the true catholic use of tradition is to serve as a means for a right understanding of Holy Scripture. Without the sanction of *this* it can enforce nothing as of obligation. It is, however, of invaluable benefit as a rule for the right interpretation of Scripture. To this end the early Church incorporated its teachings into liturgical exercises, and symbols of religious profession. These constituted the form of sound words which was to be held fast, and the sacred *depositum* which was to be kept by the Holy Ghost, that is, through grace given by Him.

In process of time, however, this sound evangelical view of the matter was superseded by the unchristian dogma of the infallibility of the Church of each particular age, and her competency to make articles of faith on the ground simply of ecclesiastical authority. Tradition became exalted to an equality with God's word as another rule of faith and duty. Worldly influences, with which circumstances powerfully invested the Church, gave to this principle an extent and degree of operation, which, combining with a rapid deterioration of intelligence and knowledge in the community, sank the reason and consciences of men under the weight of a spiritual despotism, of a pressure and extent, of which an idea can now hardly be formed. This, unchecked and unguided by the true spirit and principles of the Gospel, demanded subjection—and compelled it by fire and sword, prison and torture in this world, and terrific anathemas, presenting to the affrighted imagination all the miseries of eternal condemnation—to the most flagrant departures from Gospel truth, and the most awful perversions of Gospel precepts. Gross was the darkness which, gradually thickening and spreading, at length covered that large portion of the Christian world which owned allegiance to Rome. Substituting the Church's *unauthorized* dogmas for true catholic and scriptural verity, it kept the people in ignorance of God's word, and sank them to an awful depth of moral and spiritual degradation. But the Lord God Omnipotent still reigned. The Church was still His. He remembered His everlasting covenant. He thought upon His promises. When He

saw that the wise purposes of this severe discipline were answered, He determined to send deliverance. The power which once, by a word, dispelled the darkness that covered the face of the deep, still was His. In *this* blackness of *moral* and *spiritual* darkness, He still saw His Church. He had suffered her to drink deeply of the cup of humiliation which her own remissness and transgressions had prepared. He had let her test the sufficiency of the unhallowed substitutes for which she had departed from the pure and holy religion committed to her. He had made the wrath of man to praise Him by showing the awful consequences of forsaking His guidance. The remainder of wrath He would now restrain. In His just judgment, He had suffered such corruptions as ordinary means might, by His blessing, remove, to oppress His Church. He had permitted her to eat the fruit of her own way by wandering from the truth,—to such a distance only, however, that men might be the means of reclaiming her without supernatural interposition on His part. But in two essential respects, wherein ordinary means could do nothing for her, He had faithfully fulfilled His promise of still being with her. He had wonderfully preserved that divine revelation, and that divine ministry, of which the loss of either could be restored only by supernatural divine power.

From the darkness of error and superstition in which that revelation and ministry, by His gracious providence, retained their genuineness, He would now release His Church. *Let there be light*, was His high behest; and *there was light*. A spirit of inquiry was excited. Scripture and primitive antiquity were searched to know whether the things that had been taught were the truth. Conscientious conviction was wrought that they were not. Deep study, elevated devotion, inflexible purpose, zeal and labour unto death, were given to the work of reform. The erroneous and strange doctrines which had been allowed to mar the form of sound words, and the foreign and impure incrustations which had gathered around the sacred depositum of the faith, were removed. Uncatholic and unchristian additions and appendages to the ancient liturgical services were stripped off. The primitive creeds were brought out in their just prominence, and the unhallowed

dogmas which had been entwined around them until they were almost out of sight, were cast down to wither and die on the polluted soil that bore them. The heretical and schismatical departure of the papacy from that ministerial organization in which the living GOD had formed His Church the pillar and ground of the truth, was thrown off, and the ministry restored to the form which the Divine hand had given it. The members of CHRIST were restored to the privilege of worshipping in their own tongue, the blessed Book of GOD was read constantly in their ears, and prepared for being placed in their hands, in the same tongue; and the ordinance of preaching, so good and essential to the use of edifying, brought back to its proper place and proportion in the public ministrations. Then were restored to the people of GOD the form of sound words, and the sacred depositum of the faith, in a catholic liturgy and catholic creeds—and because catholic, therefore strictly evangelical—which, in the primitive simplicity and purity of the Church, had been GOD's instrument for guarding and preserving the Gospel, and extending its benefits to men.

I speak, brethren, you are aware, of that portion of the Church, so richly blessed of GOD, in which ours had its immediate origin. Elsewhere, it is to be lamented, the protestant work was conducted on different principles, and with far other, and sometimes most deleterious results. They set not up the catholic standard, but seemed mainly bent on change. To go the furthest possible from any given point of error, they seemed to cherish the obviously wrong and truly dangerous idea, was to arrive the nearest to the truth. The consequence was, they threw off as popish much which the papal system had retained from those happy days of the Church, when it had not yet marred and corrupted the *Gospel* system.

The time soon came when the Church of England was called to illustrate, in her position at home, her true character of a mean between two extremes. There were of her ministers and members two classes, besides those who duly appreciated the great and good things which GOD had done for her, and were true to the pious obligations thence arising. One of these classes, unwill-

ing to submit to the catholic system, went back to the popish, and organized under intruding bishops, and holding allegiance to a foreign prelate, became the English papal schism. The other, finding in the sound Christian prudence and moderation of their Church, too little room for their love of change and novelty, threw off the organization under which CHRIST had established His ministry, rejected the scriptural safeguard to the truth, and aid to devotion, found in an evangelical liturgy, and organizing on the loose and slippery principles of protestant dissent, formed another schism, which unhappily has served too well the cause of the great author of dissension, by giving rise to many schisms.

Amid these Romish and Protestant departures from catholic and evangelical principles, the Church of England stands, GOD'S witness of His unfailing mercy in blessing the land with the form of sound words, and the sacred depositum of the Gospel. And to us of this Republic a similar blessing has been vouchsafed by a branch of the same noble vine which GOD'S right hand has planted here. Although differing very materially in outward circumstances and relations, yet in the spiritual character in which the present purpose requires us to view them, the Church in England and in this country may be regarded as one. Each, in its respective nation, is the true and scriptural and therefore legitimate branch of that Holy Catholic Church of CHRIST which apostles established in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Rome, in Ephesus, in Crete, in all places whither they bore the standard, prepared the ground, and set up the pillar, of the truth as it is in JESUS. In each it is the Church in and of its proper country, in that purely catholic and evangelical sense in which there was a Church of Jerusalem, of Antioch, of Rome, of Ephesus, of Crete, long before the civil power was any other than the bitter opponent and cruel persecutor of the Church. The Church *in* England, the Church *of* England, is not such by virtue of any civil adoption or establishment. It is such because it is the true and legitimate branch *in* England and *of* England, of that kingdom which is not of this world—that kingdom of which CHRIST is the Head—His Holy Catholic Church. The same is true, with regard to this country, of our own communion. The emissaries

of the Pope are intruders here, having no right of jurisdiction, on scriptural and catholic principles, over the people of CHRIST'S pasture. Organizations on non-episcopal principles, are, by the same Scripture and catholic rule, self-deprived of such right of jurisdiction. I have no fear then of being misunderstood, and trust I have an honest and fair claim to exemption from being misinterpreted, when I speak of there being an American Church, the Church *in* and *of* America, and of its being one, on scriptural, primitive, and catholic principles, with the Church of England.

This united Church, it has appeared, is blessed with a form of sound words, a sacred depositum, embodying and enforcing that evangelical system which CHRIST and His apostles left to the Church; which was held fast and kept with a holy jealousy while the Church was in its primitive purity; which, for a long time, was guarded and defended from error as it arose; which, however, in just judgment for the sins of the daughter of Zion, GOD at length suffered to be mingled with erroneous, strange, and grievous departures from the truth as it is in JESUS, even until it became, in *their* midst, almost as a little one among ten thousand; but which, when that GOD saw fit to send deliverance, was shaken clear from these, and again appeared in its native excellency and beauty.

This form of sound words and holy depositum, is found mainly in those creeds which our Church received from times when the evangelical system was fresh in its divine purity, and in the liturgy which was carefully gathered from the worship of the same period, and from subsequent materials compared with that worship by all the jealous watching and minute comparison which men could give, who, in both enlightened understandings, and pure evangelical sensibilities and affections, were devoted to catholic truth, and zealous against papal error. The holy men who severed those creeds and that liturgy from their corrupt alliances took indeed the sacred Scriptures as their guide; but they leaned not so to their own understanding as to cast off due respect and reverence for primitive catholicity. They appealed to the holy fathers in proof of the soundness of their protests against popish

errors. They interpreted the Scriptures by that best rule which is afforded by the received catholic doctrines of the primitive Church. He is untrue to the principles of the English reformation who would underrate the value of this right use of tradition.

The creeds and liturgy, then, thus, by GOD's overruling providence and grace, brought to us from primitive times, are the main *depositum* of our faith, the chief form of sound words embodying the evangelical system once delivered unto the saints. Articles of religion and homilies have been added for the more precise delineation and defence of points in this system, rendered necessary by peculiar states and junctures of the Church.

Our articles and homilies are indeed, as well as our liturgy, to be cherished as standards of our catholic system, of great value, and of vital importance to our unity, purity, and efficiency. Those articles and homilies, however, are subsidiary to the liturgy. They were designed to illustrate, enforce, and defend the system incorporated into the liturgy long before they were formally set forth. They are, as it were, comparatively modern comments on the ancient liturgical digest of the Gospel system of faith and duty. This should be borne in mind in all our efforts to arrive at the correct meaning of the articles and homilies. The pervading catholic spirit and principles of the liturgy must be understood as designed to be incorporated into them too, and to be duly influential in the true understanding of them.

The articles and homilies also differ from the liturgy in the fact of their being in a good degree controversial documents, designed to meet peculiar errors of the times. Like all controversial writings, therefore, a correct knowledge of the circumstances giving rise to them, and under which they were prepared, is necessary to a proper understanding of them.

Allowing due influence to these principles, the articles and homilies will be found a most valuable accompaniment, and aid in its blessed objects, to that form of sound words, and depositum of the truth, with which we are favoured in our liturgy.

Thus shining in the light of GOD's truth, the Churches of England and America, stand, as we have seen, a witness against error

on both sides—on the one, against the hostility to the Gospel system which is embodied in the forces marshalled under the banner of the Roman pontiff—on the other, against the motley hosts, whose name is legion, assembled without the Catholic camp, and claiming the common appellation of Protestant.

In this position it is not to be matter of surprise if members of the Church, failing in just understanding and appreciation of her claims, should be drawn by influences bearing on the weaknesses or prejudices of the natural heart, and thus decline, sometimes to the one sometimes to the other side of truth's straight path. Time has been when the Church, too secure in its temporal ease and prosperity, has slept while the enemy has sowed the tares of fanaticism, confusion, and misrule. Sometimes zeal greater than knowledge has alarmed the Church's sons with the idea of her imperfect devotion to the cause of CHRIST, and lured them to seek in dissenting ranks greater conformity to the spirit of their Christian profession. Sometimes honest dread of one or other point of erroneous and strange doctrine or practice, has led to a formidable array of influence in directions opposite but equally erroneous. Now tendencies have threatened to popish, and now to protestant departures from the truth, unstable souls have been beguiled thereby, and anxiety and fear and serious alarm have been excited because of such defections. Meanwhile, however, the Church has stood. Her standards of faith and devotion, and her free, open, and perpetual appeals to Scripture have, by GOD'S blessing, been her preservation. Faithful pastors and faithful members have not been indifferent spectators of these things. Understanding their character and operation, looking to GOD to guide them aright in the emergencies thus created, and fully owning and feeling the duty of meeting them properly, and striving by divine aid to gather profit from them for both the Church and themselves, and turn them to her good, and her LORD'S glory, they have been blessed herein, and joy has filled their grateful hearts to see how all has been beneficently overruled.

And thus, brethren, it will ever be, if we have true faith. The LORD hath done great things for us indeed in the form of sound words which He has given us, and that good thing committed

unto us, the sacred *depositum* which we have of the faith once delivered to the saints. That "form" let us "hold fast in faith and love which is in CHRIST JESUS." That "good thing" let us "keep by the HOLY GHOST which dwelleth in us." Mistaken or false friends may stir up strife within; foes may assault without; the LORD of hosts will be with us, the GOD of Jacob will be our Refuge.

Now, especially, it behooves us, brethren, to be jealous with a godly jealousy of the security which the LORD has provided for us in our holy liturgy. They are to be feared who would weaken its hold on the minds of our people by encouraging in them the false impression that it is well to seek often, in other modes, livelier and purer exercises of evangelical devotion; and they who favour amalgamations, alliances, and co-operations, which represent Christian exertion as better made extraneously from the Church, and in at least indirect sanction of unchristian systems, than strictly within her holy borders. They should be had in great honour who, in this day of mournful departure from the evangelical principles and spirit of sound catholicism, aim and strive for their restoration, and manifest the honesty of their profession of devotion to the Church as it is, as by jealous avoiding of all compromise of her principles and appointments, so by at least an *undissembled readiness and willingness* to enjoy and present the Church as it is in its godly provisions for *daily assemblies* for prayer and hearing the divine word, and at least as oft as Sundays and holy days urge their peculiar claims, seeking GOD's favour, and sheltering themselves under His love, in the eucharistic recognition of His redeeming mercy.

If thus, as the Church provides, Christians would, in the true faith and spirit of the Gospel, have their time and attention preoccupied by devotion, and by the best means of growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, the Church would be less injured by unsanctified speculation and godless controversy; a salutary reverence for holy things would take the place of the profane intrusion into them which now insults the Majesty on high; and zeal for the Church appearing in its only legitimate connection with the renewed and sanctified

affections of the Gospel, the enemy would be ashamed, having nothing to say against us, malicious prating would be silenced, and Zion, at unity in itself, would have inscribed on every stone of the great and glorious temple within whose walls the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity designs that all men shall yet be brought, the true and blessed motto, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.

THE END.

No. 24
1844

THE CHURCH—THE FAITH—TRADITION.

A

SERMON,

BY

BENJAMIN T. ONDERDONK, D.D.

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW-YORK,

AND PROFESSOR OF THE NATURE, MINISTRY, AND POLITY OF THE CHURCH,
IN THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN THE UNITED STATES.

New-York:
ONDERDONK & FORREST,
PUBLISHERS, 4 JOHN STREET.

1844.

A HISTORY

OF THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCHES

IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK.

BY HENRY M. ONDERDONK,

WITH THE APPROBATION AND UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE

Bishop of the Diocese.

EMBELLISHED WITH A HIGHLY FINISHED ENGRAVING OF EACH CHURCH ON STEEL, EXECUTED BY J. B. FORREST.

The above splendid work, now in course of publication by ONDERDONK & FORREST, contains a correct and authentic History of the Episcopal Churches in this city, and is embellished with exquisite Steel Engravings presenting accurate and spirited views of the different edifices as they now exist. Neither pains nor expense are spared by the Publishers to render the work worthy a liberal patronage, and to make it, in all respects, one of the most elegant productions that has ever emanated from an American press. The typography is executed in the most beautiful style, upon paper of the finest quality, with stereotype plates cast with great care from *new* type made expressly for the purpose.

The whole work will be completed in about FOURTEEN numbers, at TWENTY-FIVE CENTS each, payable on delivery. No. I., containing a view of Trinity Church, and one of St. Paul's Chapel, has been already issued, and a second edition is now printing to supply the demand. No. II., containing St. John's Chapel and St. George's Church is now in press and will be ready for delivery in a few days. A number contains *sixteen imperial octavo* pages and *two engravings.*

☞ Subscribers have the advantage of the first impressions from the plates.

☞ *Payments in advance are unauthorized by the Publishers.* ☜

Publication of the Sermons

NOW IN COURSE OF DELIVERY IN ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL AND ST. CLEMENT'S CHURCH, NEW-YORK.

O. & F. propose to publish the above Sermons, (or as many of them as can be procured,) separately, in pamphlet form, as soon as they can be prepared for the press, equal in all respects to the present one, which constitutes the first of the series.

The desire manifested on all sides, for a more intimate acquaintance with the distinctive doctrines, and universal teachings of the CHURCH, both by those within and those without her fold, has encouraged the Publishers to hope that a ready sale will support them in their efforts to meet this demand; and the plan of their enterprise having been extensively approved, they also trust that they will be sustained in its execution by the clergy and members of the Church.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 021 897 753 4